

[English]

THE CENSUS

METHOD OF SENDING RETURNS TO BUREAU OF STATISTICS—EFFICIENCY OF POST OFFICE

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. A moment ago he explained there were large areas across Canada where the Post Office is so inefficient and ineffective that the census questionnaires could not be entrusted to it for delivery. Would he let the House and also the Postmaster General know what proportion of Canada is in that category.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I was not saying that. I was saying that each return must be checked by regional officials of DBS and that the officials who are checking must be in a position to ask further questions and seek clarification very rapidly. If they have to wait for mail deliveries to be made, however fast they may be, in rural areas or if they have to use telephones which more than one person are using, it would be very difficult to maintain the confidentiality and have the returns on time. I was trying to provide a reasonable explanation, but I see my hon. friend does not want to be reasonable today, or at any other time for that matter.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the reinterpretation of a statement that was capable of only one meaning, namely, that a large part of the Post Office service in Canada is out of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Robert Simpson (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, the minister has stated that these returns will have to be checked by the staff of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. How can he account for the information put out to householders who do not have to mail their returns to DBS but have to return them to the census commissioners for perusal by the census commissioner in each of the small localities?

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EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INQUIRY AS TO SUSPENSION OF DEVELOPMENT AID TO PAKISTAN

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister and is really supplementary to a question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. Have Great Britain and the United States suspended their development aid to Pakistan and has Canada considered the same course of action?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that any of the main donor countries have suspended their aid to Pakistan.

Inquiries of the Ministry INQUIRY OF THE MINISTRY

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Postmaster General. In a recent letter to the minister in charge of the Post Office the minister stated that no compensation would be paid for parcels stolen from postal boxes in the Riverside and Walkley Road areas in Ottawa during the Christmas season. I want to ask the minister if he thinks the people of Canada should use the federal mail to send Christmas gifts, or is it the attitude of the government that it does not give a damn about the poor people in senior citizens' homes who are still waiting for some of their gifts?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. That, of course, is not a question.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

INCLUSION OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON AGENDA OF JUNE MEETING

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the Acting Prime Minister in order to find out what the government's priorities may be. In view of the fact that before he left on his Russian visit the Prime Minister indicated that perhaps some arrangement could be reached between the provinces and the federal government to terminate the high unemployment that the country now faces, is this item now on the agenda, and has the federal government been involved with each province in order to use its influence to see that this matter is discussed?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Acting Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the question was rather obscure. I think the hon. gentleman was asking whether this matter was on the agenda of the forthcoming federal-provincial conference. I believe the Prime Minister made it quite clear that if the provinces wished these matters to be discussed they could be added to the agenda, at the end of the agenda, so as not to supplant the discussion of constitutional reform which has made such great progress in recent months.

Mr. Alexander: Has the Acting Prime Minister received any direction from the provinces on whether or not this would be a proper course to follow and that because of its importance unemployment should be on the agenda?

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I have not had any direct answer to this question yet. The Minister of Justice is just about to make a tour of all the provincial capitals to discuss preparations for the conference, and perhaps this will provide another opportunity for the matter to be discussed. But, as I say, the federal government is quite happy to have a discussion at the forthcoming conference on these matters, and I am sure they will be discussed. However, I hope the hon. gentleman will agree with me that constitutional reform, on which we have made quite extraordinary progress, should not be supplanted by any other subject.